

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, APER, SF

SUBJECT: ASSIGNING BLACK AMERICANS TO SOUTH AFRICA

REF: PARA 12C OF PRETORIA 4285 (SOUTH AFRICAN POLICY REVIEW)

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY STRONGLY RECOMMENDS SPECIAL EFFORT BE MADE TO STATION BLACK AMERICANS IN SOUTH AFRICA, RECOGNIZING THAT SPECIAL MEASURES MAY BE JUSTIFIED TO OFFSET UNIQUE HARDSHIPS INHERENT IN SUCH ASSIGNMENTS, WHICH PROMISE INCREASED MISSION EFFECTIVENESS IN PURSUING POLICY GOALS. END SUMMARY.

2. US POLICY OF "COMMUNICATION WITHOUT ACCEPTANCE" WOULD BE ENHANCED IF ONE OR MORE BLACK FSO'S WERE TO BE ASSIGNED TO SOUTH AFRICA. NECESSARY ACCESS TO SOME ELEMENTS OF SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK COMMUNITY IS HINDERED BY THEIR UNDERSTANDABLE SUSPICION OF WHITES. CONSEQUENTLY, US POLICY TOWARDS SOUTH AFRICA IS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD BY SOME BLACKS AND VALUABLE INFORMATION ABOUT ATTITUDES OF, AND DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN, BLACK COMMUNITY IS NOT AVAILABLE TO US.

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WE BELIEVE THAT THE ADDED ELEMENT OF BEING BLACK IS AN

MOST IMPORTANT ASSET FOR AN FSO IN ACHIEVING IMPROVED EMBASSY COMMUNICATION WITH SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS, AND FOR THAT REASON STRONGLY URGE THAT APPROPRIATE RECRUITMENT BE UNDERTAKEN.

3. THE PRESENCE OF BLACK DIPLOMATS, EITHER RESIDENT OR VISITING, HAS ALREADY HAD A POSITIVE EFFECT ON SOUTH AFRICA. AS DISTRESSING AS THE INCIDENT TWO YEARS AGO WAS, WHEN A VISITING USIS OFFICIALS WAS POORLY TREATED IN A DURBAN HOTEL, IT DID SERVE TO PROD THE SAG INTO PASSING LEGISLATION WHICH WILL ENABLE SOME HOTELS TO OPEN THEIR FACILITIES ON A PERMANENT BASIS NOT ONLY TO FOREIGN BLACKS, BUT TO BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THE PRESSURES FOR CHANGE CAN BE AUGMENTED BY SITUATIONS IN WHICH WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS ARE OBLIGED TO DEAL WITH BLACKS AS PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL EQUALS. A BLACK OFFICER SERVING HERE AS A FULL AND INTEGRAL MEMBERS OF THE MISSION'S STAFF AUTOMATICALLY CARRIES WITH HIM AN IMPORTANT AND BENEFICIAL IMPACT IN THIS RESPECT. THE SYMBOLIC AS WELL AS THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE PRESENCE OF BLACK OFFICERS, UNDERLINING AMERICAN'S COMMITMENT TO MULTIRACTIALIS, MUST NOT BE CONFUSED WITH TOKENISM. WE ARE LOOKING FOR OFFICERS, WHO, BECAUSE OF THEIR BLACKNESS IN ADDITION TO OTHER QUALIFICATIONS, WILL BE ABLE TO ADD AN EXTRA DIMENSION TO THE MISSION'S EFFECTIVENESS IN FUNCTIONING IN THIS SOCIETY AND ASSESING HOW BEST TO PROTECT U.S. INTERESTS HERE.

4. ALTHOUGH THERE CAN BE FLEXIBILITY IN ASSIGNMENT, A POLITICAL OR POLITICAL/LABOR OFFICER COULD MOST ADVANTAGEOUSLY DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN THE KIND OF CONTACTS IN THE JOHANNESBURG/PRETORIA AREA THAT WE THINK MOST USEFUL. BLACK INFLUENCE IN THE LABOR FIELD IS GROWING APACE AND WE EXPECT IMPORTANT ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS HERE. IN ADDITION TO HOMELANDS PROBLEMS WHICH TEND TO BE REFLECTED HERE ALSO, MOST BLACK ORGANIZATIONS AND THE LARGEST POLITICALLY ACTIVE BLACK COMMUNITIES ARE HERE. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE POSITION OF CONSULAR OFFICER IN PRETORIA COULD ALSO FURNISH A USEFUL BASE OF OPERATIONS FOR A POLITICALLY ORIENTED BLACK OFFICER, SINCE THE CONSULAR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LOAD ITSELF IN RELATIVELY LIGHT, INVOLVES INTERESTING CONTACTS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT, AND AFFORDS GOOD ACCESS TO BLACK COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AS WELL. IT SEEMS POSSIBLE THAT BLACK OFFICERS MAY ON OCCASION HAVE BEEN DISCOURAGED FROM SEEKING AN ASSIGNMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA BECAUSE APPROPRIATE SLOTS WERE NOT OPEN AT THE TIME THEY BECAME AVAILABLE. WE BELIEVE THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD CONSIDER CREATION OF A NEW SLOT OR EXTENDED OVERLAPPING OF

PERSONNEL AT POST TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE THIS KIND OF PROBLEM.

5. BLACK FSOS OTHERWISE WILLING TO ACCEPT POSTING HERE MAY BE DISSUADED FROM DOING SO BY LEGITIMATE CONCERNS ABOUT HAPPINESS AND WELFARE OF THEIR FAMILIES, AND THE LIKELIHOOD OF CONTINUED EXPOSURE TO PERSONAL INDIGNITIES. EMBASSY IN NO WAY WISHES TO CONVEY IMPRESSION THAT LIFE FOR A BLACK DIPLOMAT WOULD BE WITHOUT SPECIAL TENSION, ALTHOUGH WE MUST ADD THAT THE OUTLOOK IS CONSIDERABLY LESS DIRE FOR FOREIGN BLACKS THAN IN PAST YEARS. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT IT IS A MOST INTERESTING AND CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITY IN THE TRUEST SENSE OF THOSE WORDS. DEPARTMENT SHOULD TAKE STEPS TO GIVE MATERIAL RECOGNITION TO THE SPECIAL HARDSHIPS INVOLVED FOR A BLACK FAMILY. THERE ARE SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES WHICH SHOULD BE FAVORABLY CONSIDERED, OR PERHAPS TAILORED TO THE INDIVIDUAL BEING ASSIGNED. PAYMENT OF A DIFFERENTIAL SEEMS JUSTIFIED, AND AUTHORIZATION OF REST AND RECUPERATION TRAVEL FOR BLACK FAMILIES IS REASONABLE. POSSIBILITY OF PAYING SEPARATE HOUSING AND MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCES FOR FAMILIES NOT ACCOMPANYING OFFICER SHOULD BE CONSIDERED, OR AN ALTERNATIVE THAT PROVIDES FOR RESIDENCE OF FAMILY IN AN ADJACENT COUNTRY (E.G. SWAZILAND) COULD BE WORKED OUT.

6 DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO CONSIDER MAKING SPECIAL EFFORT TO CALL ATTENTION TO ASSIGNMENT POSSIBILITIES HERE THROUGH A FOREIGN SERVICE WIDE CIRCULAR, OR PERHAPS INFORMALLY THROUGH THE THURSDAY LUNCHEON CLUB FOR EXAMPLE. ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT RULE OUT RECRUITMENT FROM OUTSIDE THE FOREIGN SERVICE OF AN INDIVIDUAL WITH SPECIAL LABOR QUALIFICATIONS FOR EXAMPLE, WE BELIEVE A REGULAR FSO WOULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE. INDIVIDUALS INDICATING AN INTEREST IN ASSIGNMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MENT HERE MIGHT BE PROVIDED FUNDING FOR A TRIP FOR OFFICER AND SPOUSE TO GET A FEEL FOR SOUTH AFRICA BEFORE A FINAL DECISION IS MADE.

7. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD THE FOREGOING BE TAKEN AS SIMPLY SUGGESTING THE CREATION OF A SINGLE, SPECIFIC POSITION FOR "ONE BLACK FSO". THE EMBASSY WOULD WELCOME ASSIGNMENT OF BLACK AMERICANS TO ANY POSITION WITH PROVISION ONLY THAT DEPARTMENT AND PERSONS INVOLVED BE AWARE OF HARDSHIPS INHERENT IN SA SITUATION, INCLUDING FACT THAT PERSONS WITHOUT SUBSTANTIVE INTERESTS WOULD PROBABLY FIND CONDITIONS HARDER TO TOLERATE, AND THOSE WITHOUT DIPLOMATIC STATUS WOULD FIND DISCRIMINATORY BARRIERS HARDER TO GET AROUND.
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